

Accessing and Declassifying Historical Records

Historical records are important sources of information for conducting Phase II of the Savannah River Site (SRS) Environmental Dose Reconstruction Project. These records can help identify the amounts, chemical forms, and frequency of releases of chemical and radioactive material to the environment from the SRS.

Access to Historical Records

For credibility, scientists conducting the dose reconstruction project must be granted access and have appropriate clearances to review all historical records. Access to records at U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) sites, however, is controlled by formal security procedures. To gain access to historical records, not only must scientists have appropriate DOE security clearances, but they must also have a need-to-know. Scientists meet the need-to-know standard when they are conducting dose reconstruction research using historical records that contain environmental release data.

DOE reevaluated its policies on accessing and declassifying records when scientists began dose reconstruction studies related to the nuclear weapons complex. While records are now more available to scientists, Federal law still requires that information be reviewed and

controlled to protect sensitive data affecting national security or personnel who worked at DOE sites. For this reason, accessing and releasing records to the public from the SRS and other DOE sites has been a time consuming and expensive process.

In practice, if scientists believe a sensitive document is important to a dose reconstruction study, the agency responsible for the study and the agency owning the document must review it for declassification or to create a deleted version for release to the public. In a deleted version, sensitive information that cannot be released is deleted and the rest of the document can then be made available to the public. Deleted version documents show no classification markings except for two classification review stamps and a document number that ends with “-DV.”

<i>Example: WSRC DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW STAMP</i>	
1st Review Date: _____	Determination (Circle Number)
Authority: <input type="checkbox"/> ADC <input type="checkbox"/> ADD	1. Classification Unchanged
Name: _____	2. Classification Changed To: _____
2nd Review Date: _____	3. Classification Cancelled
Authority: ADD	4. Other: _____
Name: _____	

Classification of Records

During the nearly 50 years of SRS operations, tens of thousands of classified documents were created. Many documents were classified as soon as they were generated because of the sensitive information they contain. For example, blank forms used by operators were often stamped classified before the data were entered. Many classified documents were retained for a specific length of time—3, 5, or 20 years—and then destroyed according to DOE-approved record retention schedules. DOE

stopped this routine destruction of documents in 1986 to preserve data of interest during dose reconstruction activities.

As of 1996, approximately 2,500 of the nearly 10,000 documents found to be potentially useful to the SRS dose reconstruction project were designated as classified. These documents primarily deal with operations, technical advances, chronology of events from the early 1950s, and monitoring data.

Declassification of Historical Records

Declassifying documents is a key component of dose reconstruction. By far, the largest portion of historical documents are unclassified; however,

**UNCLASSIFIED
DOES NOT CONTAIN
UNCLASSIFIED CONTROLLED
NUCLEAR INFORMATION**

Example

even unclassified records (such as personnel records) are strictly controlled and must be reviewed for sensitive personal information before they can be released. At SRS, approximately 5,000 of the 40,000 boxes of historical records are stored in classified areas. In many cases, the documents remain classified because they contain national security information still protected by DOE. Information affecting national security, such as weapons design data,

is not needed in dose reconstruction and must remain classified. However, much unclassified information contained in these classified records is useful for estimating dose and must be extracted and made available to the scientists conducting the project. Declassifying or creating deleted versions of documents is a time-

**DELETED
VERSION**

Example

consuming and expensive task. A trained declassifier must thoroughly examine each document. Examples of sensitive information that cannot be released include nuclear weapons design data, shipping data, personnel records, and information protected by the Privacy Act.

Public Access to Project Records

People must be able to determine independently that dose estimates are as accurate as science will allow. Copies of all records used in the project and identified as potentially useful for dose reconstruction are

maintained in the University of South Carolina - Aiken public reading room for easy access. A database allowing searches for specific information is also stored in the reading room and available to the public.

Categories of Classified Information

Classified information fits into one of three categories: (1) Restricted Data, (2) Formerly Restricted Data, and (3) National Security Information. Restricted Data is a special category of classified information published by DOE. The Atomic Energy Act defines Restricted Data as, "all data concerning (1) design, construction, or utilization of atomic weapons, (2) the production of special nuclear material (such as plutonium), or (3) the use of special nuclear material in the production of energy." Most of the SRS classified historical records are Restricted Data.

Formerly Restricted Data relates mainly to military use of atomic weapons. Such data must not be given

to any other nation except under specially approved agreements.

National Security Information requires protection against unauthorized disclosure for national defense or foreign relations reasons. Information about SRS security systems and nuclear material inventories are examples of National Security Information. In 1995, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12958. This Executive Order requires that all documents classified as National Security Information be automatically declassified after a maximum of 10 years, unless a specific reason exists to keep the documents classified (for example, if a document contains certain kinds of information about a foreign country).

Levels of Classified Information

Classified information can be given one of three levels of protection: Top Secret, Secret, or Confidential. Top Secret is information of utmost importance to national defense and security. Its unauthorized disclosure could be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to national security.

In the event of unauthorized disclosure, Secret information could be

expected to cause serious damage to national security. Some of the information declassified for this project was once protected as Secret, such as tritium release data. Confidential is the lowest level of classified information. A small portion of the project-related records declassified or for which deleted versions were made was Confidential.

DOE also identifies categories of unclassified information: Unclassified Controlled Nuclear Information (UCNI), Export Controlled Information (ECI), and Official Use Only (OUO). Although this information is technically unclassified, it is not generally available to the public. Some OUO information is exempt from public disclosure under the Privacy Act, such as social security numbers and personal medical, radiation and chemical exposure records of employees.

Other agencies, such as the Department of Defense, and other

Why Some Secrets Remain

Many documents about weapons design, production, and stockpile need to remain classified to protect national security and prevent proliferation of information to foreign countries.

Public Participation

Public involvement is a key part of the dose reconstruction project. Throughout this project, workshops and meetings are being held to explain progress and ask for ideas from people

DOE sites, originated documents currently found at SRS. These organizations must approve release of their documents.

ACCESS TO CLASSIFIED DATA AND UNCLASSIFIED CONTROLLED NUCLEAR INFORMATION (UCNI) THAT HAS BEEN DELETED FROM THIS DOCUMENT IS PROHIBITED PURSUANT DOE REGULATIONS TO PROVIDE THIS DOCUMENT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW. CLASSIFIED DATA AND UCNI HAVE BEEN DELETED PURSUANT TO THESE REGULATIONS.

Example

Executive Order 12958 also allows protection of information related to national security. None of this information is required to conduct the dose reconstruction project.

who are interested in the work. To obtain more information or to offer suggestions, please call our toll-free number, 800-637-4766.